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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Hearst School Rehabilitation and Addition</b>	( <b>x</b> ) Agenda
Address:	<b>3950 37<sup>th</sup> Street, NW</b>	( ) Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>March 7, 2013</b>	( <b>x</b> ) Alteration
Case Number:	<b>13-162</b>	( <b>x</b> ) Addition
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Andrew Lewis</b>	( ) Demolition
		( <b>x</b> ) Conceptual Design

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The District of Columbia Department of General Services (DGS) and District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) propose to rehabilitate and construct a new addition to the Phoebe A. Hearst Elementary School located at 3950 37<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. Plans for the project have been developed by R. McGhee & Associates Architects who, acting on behalf of DGS and DCPS, are seeking concept approval from the HPRB.

### **Property Description**

The Hearst School was constructed in 1932. On November 15<sup>th</sup> of that year, the building was dedicated to the memory of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, one of the founders of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and mother of noted newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst. The ornate aquarium which Mr. Hearst donated in memory of his mother still exists within the school, just behind the large bay window on the building's south side.

Like many others within the District of Columbia, Hearst School was designed in the Colonial Revival Style by noted architect Albert L. Harris. It was also designed to be an "extensible school" that could be expanded according to a fully developed plan when additional space was required. However, the existing school is the only portion of the plan that was ever constructed. It consists of a rectangular brick building with quoins and other limestone trim, and a slate-covered, hipped roof topped by a small cupola. Other notable features include a Palladian window centered above the projecting entrance, a Doric column-supported portico, a fieldstone foundation and the aforementioned bay window. The rear elevation and sides of the school are articulated with similar detailing.

The DC State Historic Preservation Office considers the Hearst School eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. The small historic cabin located just to the southeast is also considered eligible because it is believed to date to the 1870s and to be associated with the nearby c. 1817 Highlands Estate (now Sidwell Friends School) which is one of Washington's few remaining late Georgian country homes. The cabin is currently owned and operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

## **Proposal**

The proposed project includes a relatively limited scope of rehabilitation work for the historic building which will provide for the necessary cleaning, repair, repointing and restoration of floors, roofing materials, downspouts, and related building elements. Doors, non-original windows, and other minor elements may also require replacement.

The most significant component of the project consists of the construction of a 34,900 square foot addition which will range from one to two stories in height and incorporate a basement. The site for the new addition is an artificially created plateau which slopes gently up from 37<sup>th</sup> Street on the west and drops very steeply to the north and east towards Tilden Street and Idaho Avenue, respectively. The remaining portion of the plateau, which was the originally intended site for expansion, is level for approximately 150' - 200' before it also slopes downward towards open fields on the south. However, this level area is occupied by tennis courts and recently installed playground equipment which effectively eliminated it from further consideration as a potential site for the new addition. Temporary classroom trailers and the historic cabin to the southeast and additional trailers on the northwest further constrict the buildable area to the currently proposed site which is located to the north and east of the historic school. This site has been reviewed by the City Archaeologist and the project was determined to have "no adverse effect" on archaeological resources.

## **Evaluation**

The new addition will defer to the historic school through its overall massing, siting, and height. It will range from a single-level administration wing on the front, to a two-story academic and support building that will occupy much of the remaining site. The one-story + basement building that will be constructed on the easternmost third of the site will be considerably lower than the original school since it will be built on a significantly lower grade. However, no portion of the new addition will be taller than the cornice line of the historic school.

A relationship among the historic school, the historic cabin and the new addition will be established by arranging the massing of the new building along angles which are related to the alignment of the historic cabin and to the established DC grid. This alignment will help to define and organize several new elements including the landscaped plaza and administration wing proposed for the front. The one-story administration wing will be set back a considerable distance from the front, and to the north of the historic school. This set back and the adjoining glass entry wall will allow Hearst's primary elevation to remain the dominant feature along 37<sup>th</sup> Street.

The proposed alignment will also shape the new entrance lobby that will be positioned between the old and new buildings to tie the entire composition together. This lobby will provide views through the new complex, allow the exterior walls of the historic school to remain fully exposed, and will be washed in natural light as a result of the large, proposed skylight. The direct physical connection between the original school and the new addition will also be housed in the lobby. The penetration necessary to establish this connection will require the loss of minimal historic fabric since it is proposed in an area that originally served as a restroom.

The planned alignment will also define a large open service area between the new addition and the rear of the historic school so that the original architectural details on that façade can continue to be appreciated. The service area will be accessed by the existing drive that runs along the south side of the building and provides some parking spaces. An amphitheater is proposed just to the south of the service area to further establish a connection to the historic cabin. Much of the new addition's southern elevation will be situated well below the historic school due to the change in grade.

The northern elevation of the new addition will feature projecting bays and large windows to break up the façade, provide architectural interest and relate to the rhythm of residences to the north. As noted earlier, this portion of the site slopes steeply down towards Tilden Street, but it is also characterized by several large trees that will screen and soften views of the new addition. Additional trees are proposed to blend the new building even more into its wooded context. The eastern elevation will be designed and screened in a similar manner.

The palette of materials that has been selected for the new addition was modified in response to community concerns and consists primarily of brick of similar and complimentary colors to Hearst's brick façade, fieldstone or cast stone for the new building's base that will echo the material of the historic foundation, and window panel modules composed of glass and precast panels that are proportionally related to the fenestration of the historic school. Aluminum and glass storefronts will be used to provide contemporary entries for the new addition. Together, these materials will establish a related architectural vocabulary between the historic school and the new building.

For the reasons stated above, the proposed concept is compatible with the historic school and its context in terms of its massing, siting, and height. The proposed materials, detailing, landscape plans and other aspects of the concept are also appropriate, but could be further refined and, perhaps, improved based upon comments by the Board. The architect should be prepared to provide samples of the proposed materials and to discuss any specific detail-related issues that may arise during the presentation in order to ensure the highest level of compatibility.

## **Recommendation**

*The staff recommends that the Board:*

- *find the concept for the Hearst School Renovation and New Addition to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act; and*
- *delegate final design development and refinements to staff, subject to comments made by the Board.*